



## Language and Culture Archives

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1. Creation of Life. There are four creator gods: hachäkyum (lit. 'our real uncle'), ähmetsäbäk (lit. 'powdermaker'), äkyanto? (meaning unknown), and kisin (the devil). These four are males, and have wives as do all Lacandon deities. Hachäkyum and his wife nayhachäkyum created Lacandon men and women, respectively. The heads of clans were made each from a different clay, the clay deposits being perhaps no more than five yards apart and within a radius of one hundred yards. The people were formed fully dressed in imitation of the creators themselves.

At the same time the Lacandons were being formed by hachäkyum and nayhachäkyum, the deities ähmetsäbäk, äkyanto?, and their wives were forming other peoples; the husbands the men, and the wives the women. Ähmetsäbäk and his wife formed the Tzeltales and (anachronistically) the Mestizos of Mexico and Guatemala. Äkyanto? and his wife formed other aliens (including those of the United States and other countries!).

Kisin (the devil) was also making figures at the same time as the other creators according to Chank'in,<sup>d</sup> although Mateo claims he was doing it later and trying to imitate the Lacandon figures of hachäkyum. Kisin is also said to have marred the figures of hachäkyum in the absence of the latter by making their eyebrows and beards black rather than red and green ??? as ~~hachäkyum~~ hachäkyum had made them.

Chank'in and Mateo also differ as to how the clay figures made by the gods came to life. Mateo says that the gods moved the figures and they came to life. Chank'in says that the gods waved a palm leaf of a certain type (sha?an) over the figures and they came to life, in the same way that is now done in healing ceremonies. In brief, incense is burned and the leaf

is held over the incense until partially covered with smoke. Then the leaf is waved over the person to be healed, and he is touched by the leaf. In the case of the figures that came to life, an ordinary fire was apparently used rather than incense.

Each of the clans that was created had an animal totem. When the figures that kisin made came to life, they reverted to their animal totems.

The Lacandon men, when asked about whom they consider the better group of people, invariably say the group made by äkyanto? is best. They actually consider the products made by them to exceed in quality those made by the ähmetsäbäk group (Tzeltales and Mestizos), and they say that they themselves are the most inferior in that they do not make things right, and have no good cooking utensils or soap.

These statements, however, do not agree with their actual philosophy. They are themselves a very proud people as is indicated in the name they give themselves: hachwinik 'true people!.

When the various groups of people mentioned above were being created, äkyanto? and hachäkyum also created animals. äkyanto? is said to have made the domestic animals for the people he created--cows, horses, pigs, cats, dogs, chickens, and so forth. hachäkyum made a corresponding group of animals for the Lacandon--the tapir (whose Lacandon name k'ashitsimin means 'jungle horse') corresponding to the domesticated horse of the aliens, wild bore corresponding to the pig, the ocelot corresponding to the cat, the coyote corresponding to the dog,

and wild turkey corresponding to the turkey. Some of the animals were reclaimed by the gods. The absence<sup>for example,</sup> of a Lacandon animal corresponding to the domesticated cow is accounted for in this way.

The alien people made by äkyanto? wisely tied up their animals and fenced them in immediately after creation. The Lacandons did not do this and their animals fled into the jungle and are there to this day.

Two things were made accidentally by hachäkyum--snakes and ants. When he had finished making the people, he rubbed his hands together in order to remove the extra clay. The excess which fell to the ground became a live snake. Since hachäkyum liked the snake, he made another so that they would multiply. He knew they were poisonous, and warned the Lacandons to be careful of them.

Ants came into existence when the child of hachäkyum and nayhachäkyum was born. There remained traces of blood on the ground, which when they came in contact with tiny particles of dust caused the latter to become live ants.

Then hachäkyum showed the Lacandon men how to make hammocks and mesh bags. His wife showed the women how to weave, grind their corn, and pat out tortillas. Äkyanto? is said to have made various objects of metal such as knives, machetes, and guns, and to have taught his children how to make them also. His children, in turn, instructed the people he had created--that is, the aliens--how to make these same metal objects. The children of äkyanto? also taught the aliens to read and write.

### ORIGIN OF THE CEIBA TREE

It appears that Hach Ak Yum had three sons, the youngest of whom was called Ak T'up. Ak T'up made some clay figures as his father had done, but his two older brothers <sup>looked at</sup> ?? this and when they became alive, they tried to kill them. They shot them first with bows and arrows, killing them, but they returned to life again. This occurred five times and then the brothers cut off the people's heads and they died, and turned into ceiba trees. When Ak T'up saw this, he called his father and told him that the trees would remain and grow here on earth. There are also said to be four such trees in the heaven where Hach Ak Yum resides.

## CREATION OF THE NETHER WORLD AND THE FOUR HEAVENS

The Lacandons believe the world to be flat, and have no record of its creation. After the earth was peopled by the gods, Kisin and his two sons killed and buried Hach Āk Yum. Hach Āk Yum then left his grave and went down below the flat earth. There he was aided by his elder brother Sukunkyum, his helper Ākänchop, and a multitude of people called Ukushte'ir Winik 'the distant people'. The number of these people is said to be approximately equivalent to the population of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas. Together with Hach Āk Yum and his helpers created the nether world, which equals the upper world in length, breadth, and height.

Ākänchop made sure the foundations of the earth. They consist of huge rock posts and beams. Meanwhile, Sukunkyum made his home, since he knew it was to be his task to care for Kisin when the nether world was completed. The completion of the nether world is said to have taken just four days, but one informant stated that Hach Āk Yum was underground twenty days.

## CREATION OF THE NETHERWORLD

### LACANDON NAMES

#### HACH AK YUM

While the netherworld was being created, ~~Quisim~~ together with his wife and children, took possession of all of Hach Ak Yum's personal effects. Then they were waiting the four days for Hach Ak Yum's soul to arrive at its destination. Then Hach Ak Yum burst open the ground where Quisim and his family were and they fell into the now-prepared netherworld where they are until the present time. After this Hach Ak Yum went up to create the heavens U Ka'ani Hach Ak Yum (which literally means the Heavens of Hach Ak Yum).

Hach Ak Yum brought together large cloud-like formations to form the heavens where he now lived. There is jungle and water and various ~~there-are~~ trees there, just as we have here. Hach Ak Yum had the same helpers in preparing heaven as he had in the preparation of the underworld with the exception that Sukuk Suk Ak Yum who remained in the underworld to guard Quisim was replaced by U Par Ak Yum, his son. They then made a second heaven above the first one for U Par Ak Yum. This is called U Ka'ani Par Ak Yum, the heavens of our paternal uncle's son. Above these two heavens, there is a third and a fourth. The third pertains to Ka Koch who is the god to whom Hach Ak Yum pays homage and above his heaven is that of ChamberK'ur

who is the supreme god of all.

The heavens of Hach Äk Yum, of his son, and of Ka Koch have their own sun, moon, and stars and have two seasons, the rainy season and the dry season--just as is true of the Lacandon area. The final heaven of Chember K'ur has only darkness. This is said to be the final resting place of the ~~Lacandones~~,--the souls of the Lacandones when the world comes to an end. The end of the world is called U Shur T'än which literally means "words come to an end."

Before this time, the souls of dead Lacandones either reside in the Netherworld with Quisim or are cared for by U Me'sa Bäk, the creator of Tzeltales and mestizos. These are the good souls.